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WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Regional Meeting for Asia
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Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE REGIONAL MEETING

Recommendations on the World Conference and its preparation submitted by the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF), a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

"All couples and individuals have the basic right to decide freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children and to have information and means to do so"[1]

INTRODUCTION

For the past 25 years there has been official universal acceptance that access to family planning information and services is a basic human right. Although still denied to millions of men and women, this right was endorsed at the International Conference on Human Rights in 1968. It has since been repeatedly restated in international instruments, and is slowly beginning to find expression in national constitutions.

The recognition of reproductive rights is fundamental to the establishment of equal rights for men and women since it underscores the right of women to control and manage their own fertility, thus enabling them to enjoy other human rights, for example, the right to good health.

IPPF

The International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) is the world's largest voluntary family planning organization, with member Family Planning Associations (FPAs) in over 130 countries. The Federation works to promote and support family planning services internationally and to educate people and governments about the benefits for the whole family of spacing and planning births.

Further, in its Strategic Plan, agreed in October 1992, IPPF and its member associations reiterated IPPF's goal to promote and defend the right of women and men, including young people, to decide freely the number and spacing of their children, and the right to the highest possible level of sexual and reproductive health.

To achieve this aim, IPPF promotes the concept of the planned family and the provision of family planning services, on the widest possible scale, so that people may voluntarily, and through informed choice, adopt and practise appropriate methods of family planning. IPPF is totally opposed to any form of coercion, direct or indirect, in the provision, acceptance or practice of family planning, and part of the work of the Federation is the analyzing, monitoring, and speaking out against any infringements of reproductive rights, which may occur through obstructive or coercive national policies and practices.

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[1] World Population Plan of Action (paragraph 14 (f), agreed at the UN World Population Conference in Bucharest, 1974

WOMEN'S RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

IPPF actively works for the establishment of equal rights for women to enable them to exercise control over their own reproductive and sexual health choices. The Federation works to ensure that women's rights to family planning, sexual and reproductive health remain a priority in national and international development policies, and that women's right to health are protected against the pressures of imposed demographic goals.

With other organisations, IPPF is urging the International Conference on Human Rights to recognize that "**women's rights are human rights**". Women are subject to certain violations of their rights because they are women, as in the case of rape, domestic violence and reproductive health, and it is important that any violations of their rights should receive the same priority and have access to the same channels of redress as other violations of human rights.

Article 3 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights affirms the right of the individual to life, liberty and security of the person. Denial of a woman's reproductive rights can endanger her life thereby depriving her of the right to life. As was recognized by the World Conference on Safe Motherhood (1987) half a million women die annually from conditions arising from pregnancy related causes.

IPPF urges the Meeting to recommend that the Conference reaffirm the right of access of both women and men to reproductive health services, including family planning, as well as "the basic human right ... to determine freely and responsibly the number and spacing of their children" as was included in the Proclamation of Teheran (para 16) at the International Conference on Human Rights in 1968. This involves recognizing the need to ensure that these important human rights are universally enjoyed with free and informed consent and access to the widest possible range of services.

IPPF also calls for recognition of the special needs of women in terms of their reproductive rights, which must include right of access to family planning and to other reproductive health services to ensure women's rights to adequate health and well-being. Discrimination against women contributes to their ill-health, and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) requires member states to eliminate discrimination against women in the exercise of their right to health care, including family planning. IPPF urges the Meeting to recognize the importance of this Convention and to recommend that the same level of implementation is applied to this Convention as is applied to other human rights instruments.